

## Fort Lauderdale History: A Timeline

*Compiled by Susan Gillis. Thanks to William G. Crawford, Jr. for his contributions.*

Approximately 500 BCE (2500 years ago) prehistoric Indians, the Tequesta, are living along New River; they are no longer present in South Florida by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

1793 Surles (Charles) and Frankee Lewis family and other Bahamians are the first known white settlers on New River.

1836 The family of William Cooley is massacred by the Seminoles shortly after the start of the Second Seminole War (Dec 1835). New River settlement's survivors escape to Cape Florida.

1838 200 mounted Tennessee Volunteers under Major William Lauderdale and Company D Third Artillery under Lt. Robert Anderson establish the first Fort Lauderdale at the forks of New River. William Lauderdale leaves by April 1838—he dies en route home to Tennessee.

1839 The second Fort Lauderdale, a temporary encampment on New River at about SE 9<sup>th</sup> AV, is established Feb. 1839, and the third fort, on the beach near today's Bahia Mar, is completed in September 1839.

1842 The last garrison leaves the (third) Fort Lauderdale located at the beach. In August, Second Seminole War ends.

1876 U.S. Government builds House of Refuge Number 5 near present Bonnet House. It is relocated to its proper site near present Bahia Mar in 1891.

1893 Frank Stranahan arrives at New River to operate the ferry and overnight camp for the new county stageline (Bay Biscayne Hack Line). He opens a trading post and calls it "Fort Lauderdale."

1893 Florida East Coast Canal (now the Intracoastal Waterway) begins surveying and dredging in the Fort Lauderdale area.

1896 Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) completed to Fort Lauderdale, then to Miami, opening up South Florida for development. Fort Lauderdale becomes a farming community. Many of Fort Lauderdale's early African American pioneers come as workers on the railway.

1899 First Fort Lauderdale school opens, a one room schoolhouse located near today's South Andrews and Southwest Fifth Street.

1899 A non-denominational community church begins meeting in the schoolhouse.

1901 The Stranahan House, home of pioneers Frank and Ivy Stranahan, is constructed by builder Ed King. It is the oldest surviving structure in Broward County.

1903 The first denominational church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, forms.

1904 Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church, serving the black community, begins meetings at what is now Northwest Second Street and First Avenue.

1906 Fort Lauderdale becomes the center of statewide attention when Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward begins his Everglades drainage project with the North New River Canal (off South Fork of New River).

1906-07 The first school for African American children opens in a one room schoolhouse located north of Broward Boulevard on Northwest Third Avenue.

1911 The Woman's Civic Improvement Association is formed, later to become the Fort Lauderdale Woman's Club.

1911 People arrive by the thousands (in a town of about 500 permanent residents) to participate in a lottery for not-yet-drained Everglades land sold by Richard J. Bolles's Florida Fruit Lands Company.

1911 The need for services like sanitation prompts Fort Lauderdale citizens to incorporate March 27, 1911.

1911 *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* begins publication. Later the *Fort Lauderdale News*, later the *Sun-Sentinel*.

1912 North New River Canal completed. It is possible to go inland by water from Fort Lauderdale to the Gulf of Mexico. People use the canal system for transport as well as drainage. Fish houses spring up along New River causing terrible pollution.

1912 Fort Lauderdale is known as a riverport and winter vegetable shipping capital. People ship their produce down the canal and river to the docks by the Florida East Coast Railway station to be packed and shipped north.

1912 Florida East Coast Canal (now the Intracoastal Waterway) is completed from Jacksonville to Miami.

1912 Tom Bryan opens the Fort Lauderdale Ice and Electric Company (later Florida Power and Light) and generates electricity for public consumption.

1912 The city gets its first water pumping station and water mains.

1912 A fire burns destroys most of the business district; a fire department is formed soon afterwards.

1914 Telephone service begins.

1915 Broward County is carved out of Dade and Palm Beach Counties with a population of about 4700.

1915 The Dixie Highway is completed through Broward County.

1915 Fort Lauderdale Central School opens (later Fort Lauderdale High School). Building designed by famous Miami architect August Geiger.

1917 The first causeway to the beach is completed, Las Olas Boulevard.

1917 The Fort Lauderdale Woman's Club completes its clubhouse in Stranahan Park where it still stands. It houses the city's first library, predecessor to the Broward County library system.

1917 Fort Lauderdale becomes a **city** with 300 registered voters.

1918 The state supreme court finally hears the last appeal and upholds the decision in favor of Fort Lauderdale in its legal fight against Mary Brickell for riparian rights within the original town limits. (This pivotal case gave the city and its citizens dock rights to the riverfront downtown. Riverwalk is a legacy of that suit.)

1919 Idlewyld becomes the first of the islands off Las Olas, reclaimed from mangrove swamp, to be developed.

1919 D.W. Griffith brings his troupe and crew to Fort Lauderdale to film the *Idol Dancer*.

1921 The city builds its first golf course, Southside, where the international airport now stands. One of the first visitors is President-elect Warren Harding, "kidnapped" by locals on his way south on his yacht. He good naturedly plays a round and enjoys later visits to town.

1922 Charley Rodes begins dredging a series of finger islands off Las Olas to create a subdivision of all waterfront property called Venice. W.F. Morang uses the same technique to develop the Rio Vista Isles.

1922 J.C. Turner, a New York investor, declares in a *Fort Lauderdale Herald* story that "Lauderdale should be called the Venice of America."

1922 Fort Lauderdale passes the first ordinance establishing a color line restricting black residents to west of the Florida East Coast Railway tracks.

1922 Dr. James Sistrunk, pioneer African American physician, arrives in town. (He delivered over 5000 babies during his career.)

1924 A masonry structure designed by architect John Peterman, named the Colored School, opens on Northwest Fourth Street. Later named Dillard, in honor of a white philanthropist, it survives today as the Old Dillard Museum.

1925 The Florida land boom is at its height. Lots in Progresso (north Fort Lauderdale) which sold for \$200 in 1922, bring \$1,500 to \$2,000 in 1925. Downtown properties sell for up to 50 times the original price.

1925 The Florida East Coast Railway places an embargo on building supplies in the state. There is not enough labor to unload lumber and other supplies in rail yards throughout Florida. Everyone is too busy making real estate deals.

1926 Seminole Indian Annie Tommie abandons her camp, located where North Fork Elementary is today, to move to the new Dania (now Hollywood) Seminole Reservation. (This was the last permanent Seminole camp in the city of Fort Lauderdale.)

1926 The Dixie Water Plant (Now the Peele Dixie Water Plant ), a beautiful Mediterranean Revival style complex, opens on West Dixie Highway (State Road 7).

1926 The worst hurricane ever to strike Fort Lauderdale hits that city and Miami on September 18<sup>th</sup>, causing loss of lives and incredible damage. It is the death knell of the land boom.

1926 The city opens the new Westside Golf Course, later the Fort Lauderdale Golf and Country Club.

1927 Fort Lauderdale limits beach access for African American citizens to an area north of city limits (later Galt Ocean Mile).

1927 Fort Lauderdale adopts much of the city improvements laid out by professional planner Richard Schermerhorn in 1926. They include the quadrant address system in use today, city parks, and the prototype for Riverwalk.

1927 The Seaboard Air Line becomes the second railroad system in South Florida. (Today the route of Amtrak and Tri-Rail)

1927 January 27, federal agents arrest the county sheriff, all of his deputies, the assistant chief of Fort Lauderdale police and six police officers on charges of conspiracy to violate Prohibition laws. (Charges later dropped.)

1928 Port Everglades opens. President Coolidge is scheduled to set off the final blast to clear the channel for the port, but local engineers have to set it off themselves.

1928 The Las Olas Casino Pool opens east of today's International Swimming Hall of Fame. It is the scene of many national and international competitions and brings fame to the small town.

1929 The only legal hanging in Broward County takes place at Coast Guard Station Number 6, where Bahia Mar now stands. Hanged is Horace Alderman, a smuggler who murdered several federal agents in 1927.

1929 Merle Fogg Field, named after the town's first aviator who was killed in a crash, opens where the Southside Golf Course once stood (Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport).

1929 The father of Fort Lauderdale, trading post operator Frank Stranahan, commits suicide by jumping into New River. Everyone in town attends the funeral.

1931 Henry Morgenthau, FDR's Jewish Secretary of the Treasury, visits Fort Lauderdale on Coast Guard business. He is told by the hotel that although he is welcome, his Jewish staff is not. (He elects not to stay here.) *Restricted* anti-Semitic policies become common at Fort Lauderdale accommodations and in Fort Lauderdale deed restrictions.

1931 Fort Lauderdale citizens put on the River Revelry festival, honoring the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation.

1931 The *Amphitrite*, a reconfigured monitor class naval ship, arrives in Fort Lauderdale and is opened as a floating hotel.

1934 Fort Lauderdale activist Ivy Stranahan and then-State Representative Dwight Rogers are pivotal in passing Florida's Homestead Exemption Act.

1935 Las Olas Casino Pool holds the First Collegiate Aquatic Swim Forum, considered by many to be the origins of Fort Lauderdale Spring Break.

1935 African American resident Reuben Stacy is hanged by a lynch mob after being accused of the attempted rape of a white woman. (The incident took place on Davie Boulevard. Many people, including children, witnessed the hanging.)

1935 The 1935 hurricane pushes the floating hotel *Amphitrite* onto Idlewyld; it later finds a berth on the island at the center of the Las Olas Causeway. (Removed as a hazard in 1942.)

1936 Two Fort Lauderdale citizens represent the U.S.A. in the Berlin Olympics. Hometown heroine Katy Rawls, international swimming and diving star, brings home a bronze and silver in swimming and diving. Les McNeece plays in the first exhibition baseball game.

1937 Fort Lauderdale becomes known as Mandamus Manor because of all of the writs of mandamus filed against the city commissioners to raise taxes to pay for interest on defaulted bonds (left over from the boom times).

1937 The first Jewish temple, Emanu-El, is completed on South Andrews Avenue and Southwest Eighteenth Street.

1937 The Murphy Act is passed in the state legislature, allowing for statutory forfeiture of lands for nonpayment of taxes. It allows taxpayers throughout Florida to settle large amounts of taxes for a small amount and brings 60,000 parcels of land back onto the active tax roles.

1937 The Lauderdale Beach Hotel opens, Fort Lauderdale's queen of the beach, built in the trendy Art Moderne style.

1937 The city's first sewage system is completed with federal aid.

1938 Broward General Hospital opens in the renovated Granada Apartments on South Andrews Avenue.

1938 African American residents are not welcomed at Broward General or other hospitals; Provident Hospital opens on what is now Sistrunk Boulevard in a small wooden house. After many additions, it finally closes in 1964 when Broward General is integrated.

Ca. 1939 Fort Lauderdale's first African American millionaire John Hill II opens the Hill Hotel on Northwest Seventh Avenue and Fifth Street and the Windsor Club on Northwest Fifth Avenue. Both will host jazz luminaries like Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Louis Armstrong.

1939 The German freighter *Arauca* seeks sanctuary at Port Everglades from the British cruiser *Orion*. The crew is later interned at the Broward County Courthouse and sent to Ellis Island for the duration of the war. Broward Countians realize they are on the edge of war.

1940 The second causeway to the beach is completed, Northeast Tenth Street (Sunrise Boulevard).

1940 The Dixie Court Housing Project for African American citizens opens between Northwest Ninth and Eleventh Avenues and Northwest Second and Fourth Streets. It is followed by the Doctor Kennedy Homes in 1941 for white citizens on Broward Boulevard.

1940 The Town and Tennis Club is completed at Southside Park—the beginnings of Fort Lauderdale's reputation as a tennis Mecca.

1940 Circus man Clyde Beatty acquires a lion farm on the site of an old rockpit in Victoria Park and what is now East Sunrise Boulevard. It becomes the town's first real tourist attraction, the Clyde Beatty Jungle Zoo.

1942 Hometown hero Sandy Nininger is killed in action at Bataan; he is awarded the first Congressional Medal of Honor of WWII for his actions.

1942 Educator Clarence C. Walker pleads for the overturn of the seven month school year for African American students, who spend the rest of the year working in the fields or caring for younger siblings. He dies shortly after his pleas are rejected by the Broward County school board.

1942 The Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station, a bomber training base, is established at Merle Fogg Field (now the international airport). Later president George Bush trains there. The port becomes a U.S. Navy Section Base, and the Coast Guard maintains a mounted patrol from south of Hallandale to Boynton Inlet. Coast artillery units are established along the beach and the Lauderdale Beach and Tradewinds Hotels are occupied as training centers. Fort Lauderdale is an armed camp. People have to use black out curtains or lamps to prevent lights shining from their houses at night and headlights are painted half black. Rationing of important supplies like rubber, fuel, and coffee begins.

1945 WW II ends. Spontaneous celebrations take place throughout the city. Many servicemen will return with their new families in tow in ensuing years.

1945 Flight 19, consisting of five TBM Avengers, leave the Naval Air Station on a routine training mission, never to return. The incident becomes legendary in the mythology of the Devil's Triangle.

1946 A federal court overturns the seven month school year for African American students in Fort Lauderdale. Dillard students begin a nine month school calendar.

1946 WFTL, Fort Lauderdale's first radio station, begins broadcasting on a houseboat in New River Sound.

1946 The Boston Braves come for spring training at the Westside Ball Park, at the site of the present Fort Lauderdale Police Department headquarters.

1946 Coast Guard Base 6, at the south end of the beach, is declared surplus. Through an amazing community effort, Fort Lauderdale citizens help acquire the site for the city in 1947.

1946 Coral Ridge Properties forms, beginning just north of Sunrise Blvd. At the beginning, Coral Ridge Properties land is in unincorporated Broward. CRP purchases land from Arthur Galt for \$19 million, the most expensive land purchase at that time. It includes the Galt Ocean Mile and Bermuda Riviera subdivisions.

1947 Two back to back hurricanes in September and October and a wet year result in the 1947 Flood in which most of southeast Florida is underwater, including Fort Lauderdale. The property damage is tremendous. The flood results in the eventual creation of what is now the South Florida Water Management District.

1947 The city of Fort Lauderdale acquires West Prospect Satellite Field, a naval air landing strip during WWII. This becomes Fort Lauderdale Municipal Airport and in 1963, Executive Airport.

1948 *Fort Lauderdale News* publisher Governor Robert Hayes Gore begins an editorial campaign against illegal gambling, very common in the county at the time. Assistant state attorney Dwight Rogers Jr. pursues illegal gambling establishments here. In 1950, longtime Sheriff and Fort Lauderdale pioneer Walter Clark is interviewed on a new media, television, by the Kefauver Commission regarding gambling and Clark's knowledge of it. Clark is later indicted for possession of slot machines but is acquitted.

1949 Bahia Mar Yachting Center opens on the site of Coast Guard Base 6, sealing Fort Lauderdale's reputation as the Venice of America.

1949 Hugh Taylor Birch State Park opens on land once owned by one of Fort Lauderdale's wealthiest and most enigmatic pioneers.

1930s to 1940s Fort Lauderdale leads most of the nation's top cities in growth with a 320% population increase.

1950 War Memorial Auditorium, made possible by yet another community fund raising effort, opens in Holiday Park

1950 The Gateway Shopping Center opens in what is considered far northern Fort Lauderdale, at the site of the Beatty Zoo.

1950 Sunland Park, later J.C. Carter Park, opens for African American residents on Sunrise Boulevard.

1950s Las Olas Boulevard becomes an important high end retail district.

1953 Mackey Airlines begins service from Fort Lauderdale to the islands.

1954 The Sunrise Shopping Center, a glamorous modern open air facility, opens on east Sunrise Boulevard and begins to draw patrons away from downtown retail establishments.

1954 *Holiday* magazine declares Fort Lauderdale the "greatest college town in the country," because of the annual collegiate spring invasion.

Mid 1950s Affordable air conditioners and DDT open up Fort Lauderdale and South Florida for further development.

1955 Holy Cross Hospital opens.

1957 City commissioners vote to sell the Fort Lauderdale Golf and Country Club (originally the Westside Golf Course) rather than integrate.

1958 Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation tennis instructor Jimmy Evert opens a new tennis center at Holiday Park. He initiates a Ladies Day and training clinics for young players, including his daughter Chris Evert. (Chris's impressive career would help legitimize women's tennis as a major sport. She is arguably one of the city's most famous natives.)

1959 The Breakwater Towers (the co-op, now condominium) high rise, opens on Fort Lauderdale beach and marks the beginning of a beach condo revolution.

1959 Lockhart stadium (football field) opens near Executive Airport.

1950s Fort Lauderdale becomes the state's fifth largest city.

1960 The city's most controversial project, the New River tunnel, is completed. (*Fort Lauderdale News* publisher Governor Gore led the charge against the tunnel. Editor of the Broward edition of the *Miami Herald*, Henry Kinney, promoted it. That is why it is the Henry Kinney Tunnel.)

1960 A beach movie entitled "Where the Boys Are" is filmed in Fort Lauderdale and premieres at the Gateway Theatre in December.

1961 Three months after the premier of "Where the Boys Are," 50,000 college students invade Fort Lauderdale's beaches for what will come to be known as Spring Break.

1961 The NAACP stages a series of wade-ins by African American citizens on Fort Lauderdale's beaches to protest a lack of facilities and access at the black beach (today Lloyd Park) and segregation. A year later, the city opens its beaches to all citizens.

1961 Fort Lauderdale stadium (aka Yankee Stadium) opens near the Executive Airport.

1962 The Cuban Missile Crisis impacts locals when Port Everglades hosts army and navy troops while serving as a potential staging area for military action further south. Area school students practice duck and cover drills in anticipation of nuclear attack.

1962 The New York Yankees make Fort Lauderdale their new Spring Training headquarters.

1964 Hurricane Cleo wreaks havoc with Fort Lauderdale. The day of the storm is the only day the *Fort Lauderdale News* is not published.

1965 Fort Lauderdale replaces the aging Las Olas Casino Pool with what would become the International Swimming Hall of Fame complex, a world class aquatic center.

1965 Ocean World, a marine park, opens on the Seventeenth Street Causeway.

1969 After several years of tension, the alleged police shooting of a black woman outside a store sets off a week of rioting in the near northwest neighborhood.

1969 Fort Lauderdale gets a new city hall, designed by modernists William Parrish Plumb and Robin John.

1960s Fort Lauderdale grows 75 % during the decade—a growth rate higher than any other decade.

1970 The First National Bank (aka the Landmark Bank), the first real skyscraper in downtown, breaks ground on the site of the old Fort Lauderdale High School.

1970 (Fort Lauderdale) NAACP attorney George Allen sues for the complete desegregation of Broward County schools on behalf of his two young sons. By August 1971, the federal appeals court orders mandatory busing to achieve integration.

1972 The New River Inn (ca. 1905) becomes the first Fort Lauderdale property to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1972 Lethal yellowing, a disease of the ubiquitous Jamaican Tall coconut palm, first appears in Broward County. The disease eliminates every tree, forever changing the face of Fort Lauderdale.

1973 Andrew De Graffenreidt becomes the first African American Fort Lauderdale city commissioner.

1973 Virginia Shuman Young becomes the first woman mayor of Fort Lauderdale, serving until 1975.

1974 The Downtown Development Authority demolishes existing structures between Southeast First and Second Avenue and Broward Boulevard and Southeast First Street in anticipation of redevelopment. The land sits empty throughout the decade.

1975 The city creates its first official historic district in what was once the West Side, west of the Florida East Coast Railway tracks, and passes a historic preservation ordinance.

1977 I-95 is completed through Broward County. The population influx shifts from Fort Lauderdale proper to western Broward County.

1977 Fort Lauderdale residents are surprised by the first and only recorded snowfall in the history of the city.

1978 A new federal courthouse is completed on the corner of Broward Boulevard and Northeast Third Avenue, paving the way for downtown redevelopment.

1978 The Wingate Landfill site closes. It is later identified as a superfund site by the EPA. In 2002 it is capped with a geosynthetic membrane. Local residents still distrust cleanup efforts.

1980 Downtown's anchor store, Burdines, moves to the Galleria, a mall created around the old Sunrise Shopping Center.

1980 Broward County government, desperate for space, purchases the old Burdines building and remodels it into a governmental center.

1981 Winterfest Inc. is formed to manage Fort Lauderdale's annual holiday boat parade.

1983 Investors in the IGBE, International Gold Bullion Exchange, are surprised when bankruptcy investigators open the company vault in Fort Lauderdale only to find painted wood gold bars.

1983 Evelyn Bartlett deeds the Bonnet House property to the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation to protect the last remaining enclave on the beach.

1984 A new Broward County Main Library, designed by Robert Gatje, opens across from the Governmental Center.

1984 The newly restored Stranahan House, for many years the Pioneer House restaurant, opens as a house museum.

1985 As many as 350,000 college students invade Fort Lauderdale beaches at Spring Break.

1986 The city erects a wall along A1A for crowd control and enacts the open container law to discourage the young visitors. The crowds move north to Daytona Beach.

1986 Fort Lauderdale's art museum moves to a glamorous new building designed by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes at Las Olas and Andrews Avenue.

1987 FAU builds the Askew Tower adjacent Broward Community College's downtown headquarters on Las Olas Boulevard.

1988 The 110 Tower, the tallest building in two counties, opens opposite the courthouse complex.

1989 I-595 opens, linking Port Everglades with I-75.

1980s Fort Lauderdale's historic African American business district is completely demolished to make way for redevelopment, planned since the 1960s.

1991 The Broward Center for Performing Arts Center opens in a newly created Arts and Science District west of the Florida East Coast Railway tracks.

1991 Fort Lauderdale entrepreneur Wayne Huizenga brings his Blockbuster Video empire to the former Mercedes City Center complex on South Andrews Avenue. In 1994, entertainment giant Viacom acquires Blockbuster and eventually moves to Dallas.

1991 The Greater Fort Lauderdale-Broward County Convention Center opens at Port Everglades.

1993 The city celebrates the completion of the north side of Riverwalk linear park.

1993 The Fort Lauderdale Historical Society takes over the management of three historic structures and two modern buildings on Southwest Second Avenue which eventually become the Fort Lauderdale History Center.

1993 Tent City, a large temporary shelter for the homeless, develops just north of Broward Boulevard between the main bus station and city hall. The shelter causes a stir for downtown businesses and travelers.

1993 The city completes a one and a half mile beachfront renovation project featuring a beautiful palm lined promenade and snaking walkway.

1995 The city of Fort Lauderdale unveils its first website.

1996 A city of Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation worker kills five former co-workers on a shooting spree, then kills himself.

1998 After many years and the loss of many historic structures, the Las Olas Riverfront retail and entertainment complex opens on Brickell Avenue, the city's original main street.

1999 The Homeless Assistance Center opens on Sunrise Boulevard and Northwest Seventh Avenue. Its capacity for 200 people and strict curfews limits its use by homeless residents.

1990s Haitian refugees find their way to downtown Fort Lauderdale neighborhoods. The city's door to door recycling instructions are printed in English, Spanish, and Creole.

2000 Fort Lauderdale celebrates the new millennium with a party where the city first began—on the banks of New River.

2002 A new bridge replaces the 1956 span on the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Causeway, officially named the E. Clay Shaw Jr. Bridge. The high span is an attempt at mitigating the traffic bottleneck created by the constant raising and lowering of the old bridge.

2005 Hurricane Wilma hits Fort Lauderdale from the west, causing power outages in many parts of the county for as long as two weeks. It is one of the costliest storms ever to hit the U.S.

2007 Frank Adderley, a veteran police officer, becomes Fort Lauderdale's first African American police chief.

2009 Port Everglades unveils Terminal 18, the world's largest single cruise ship terminal built for the world's largest ocean liner, Royal Caribbean's *Oasis of the Seas*.

2010 Fort Lauderdale lawyer Scott Rothstein pleads guilty and is sentenced to fifty years for the biggest financial fraud (a Ponzi scheme) in the region's history--\$1.2 billion dollars.

2011 The city of Fort Lauderdale celebrates the centennial of its incorporation with ongoing celebrations, exhibits, a speakers' bureau, a traveling history trunk program, and special centennial website.